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SUBJECT: MORAKOT SITREP 6: HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY PASSES,
TAIWAN MOVES TO NEXT PHASE OF RESPONSE

REF: A. TAIPEI 996 (SITREP NO. 5)
[1](#)B. TAIPEI 992 (SITREP NO. 4)
[1](#)C. TAIPEI 979
[1](#)D. TAIPEI 974 (SITREP NO. 3)
[1](#)E. TAIPEI 967
[1](#)F. TAIPEI 966 (SITREP NO. 2)
[1](#)G. TAIPEI 958 (SITREP NO. 1)
[1](#)H. STATE 83578

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The death toll from Typhoon Morakot has hit 127, with an additional 522 deaths likely to be confirmed in the coming weeks. Taiwan is moving into a second phase of disaster response, with operations focusing on sheltering and relocating victims. USAID/OFDA Acting Regional Advisor Ron Libby assesses that the humanitarian and emergency situations have stabilized, and the major task facing relief workers is opening roads into still-inaccessible areas. Taiwan has adequate equipment to speed up the pace of current road excavation work, but still lacks sufficient heavy-lift capacity to bring this equipment into inaccessible areas. Taiwan does not appear to have given thought to relocating or responding to the challenge posed by at least 10,000 residents who refuse to leave affected areas that may once again be hit by severe weather as typhoon season continues. Although the heaviest rains to hit Taiwan in 50 years are long gone, political fallout for the KMT continues, already claiming Vice Foreign Minister Andrew Hsia. END SUMMARY.

Human and Economic Toll

[1](#)2. (SBU) The death toll from Typhoon Morakot has reached [1](#)127. 307 individuals are now reported missing and 45 injuries are attributed to the typhoon. The Kaohsiung Emergency Response Center is still seeking confirmation of the deaths of a reported 491 individuals in Xiaolin village and a further 31 individuals reportedly buried in Xinkai village. 5,520 individuals are currently housed in 53 shelters, awaiting resettlement. 21,600 households remain without stable access to clean water. 12,558 households are without power, and an additional 2,666 do not have telecommunications service.

13. (SBU) All five national highways have been repaired. 46 out of 131 damaged provincial highways and 37 out of 65 damaged country roads still require repairs. An estimated 100 factories in the Kaohsiung area have been forced to stop operations every other day due to clean water shortages following the typhoon. Local utility companies are working to resolve this issue. The Executive Yuan is today convening a meeting to pass a special budget for typhoon reconstruction, with Ministry of Finance officials reporting that at least USD3.3 billion will be required for rebuilding.

14. (SBU) AIT/K reports that in Kaohsiung County there are over 1,000 villagers who are refusing to leave their affected hometowns because the weather has improved and because 3-4 Taiwan soldiers have been deployed to each village to provide assistance with aid distribution and communication links with the outside. U.S. helicopters on August 18 began bringing excavation equipment to six locations in Liu-Guei and Lao-Nung villages. The excavators will be used to open roads into these inaccessible areas. In Taitung County, agricultural damages are estimated at over USD30 million, 285 households are still without access to clean water, and 73 households are without power. Chiayi County Deputy Magistrate Wu Rong-hui expressed disappointment that U.S. helicopters would not be bringing excavation equipment to affected towns in Chiayi today, and noted that agricultural losses in his county are estimated at roughly USD53 million. In Tainan County, clean-up and sanitation work continues, with agricultural losses mounting to USD62 million.

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Relief Measures

15. (SBU) The Executive Yuan has decided that on August 19 the Disaster Reduction Committee (DRC) will take over the second phase of disaster relief from the Central Emergency Operations Center. Minister of State Tsai Hsung-Hsiung will head the DRC. This move signals that the authorities are re-focusing relief work on sheltering and relocating victims. The Ministry of Interior has asked the Disaster Relief Foundation to provide subsidies to victims whose homes were destroyed by the typhoon. Victims can choose from three subsidy programs: one for renters, one for home buyers, and a third for government resettlement.

16. (SBU) Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided to donate another 100 million Yen (USD1.1 million) to typhoon relief efforts after making a 10 million Yen donation last week. Deputy Secretary-General MaXiao Guang of the PRC's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) will reportedly fly to Taiwan today to personally hand out relief materials, such as blankets and sleeping bags, to typhoon victims. Also arriving from the PRC today are pre-fabricated houses for typhoon victims. News of this particular donation has prompted some to demand the authorities investigate whether these houses contain unhealthy levels of toxic chemicals like asbestos before allowing typhoon victims to move in.

USAID/OFDA Assessment

17. (SBU) AIT debriefed USAID/OFDA Acting Regional Advisor Ron Libby today after his return from visiting affected areas in southern Taiwan. Libby noted that the humanitarian emergency appears to have passed, and Taiwan appears to have sufficient stockpiles of food and water to meet basic humanitarian needs for the time being. He added that there doesn't appear to be any need for medical support beyond that already on hand. The most glaring need he identified was Taiwan's requirement to transport heavy equipment into areas

inaccessible by ground transportation. At Tainan Airfield, Libby observed that Taiwan has placed earth-moving and excavating equipment of multiple sizes and capacities at the ready for transport into areas cut-off by mudslides and washed-out bridges. Current lift-capacity available to Taiwan from both domestic helicopters and on-site DoD helicopters in support of relief missions are unable to carry the larger equipment into the disaster zones. Libby assesses that use of the larger equipment would allow road clearing to occur at five times the speed of current road clearing operations. Currently, only smaller-sized excavating equipment can be lifted into inaccessible areas. Libby notes that if roads can be cleared faster this would allow for a faster and more effective tempo of relief operations.

18. (SBU) Other relief issues to consider are more effective ways to deliver potable water to cut-off areas. Currently, bottled water is being brought in by helicopter, which takes away from the ability of the helicopters to fly in foodstuffs or undertake other missions. Installing rain catchment devices on rooftops would be a better solution, in Libby's assessment, but the issue has not been explored adequately by officials on the ground. (Note. USAID Regional Director Al Dwyer who will be arriving tomorrow has water sanitation expertise.) Libby states that diseases like cholera are unlikely to become a problem, though there is some concern about dengue fever. However, the Australians are bringing in vector control solutions to address this problem.

19. (SBU) Libby adds that there are at least 10,000 individuals who have chose to stay in affected areas. Morakot was only the second typhoon to hit Taiwan in 2009. The Pacific typhoon season will likely see an additional 15

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typhoons form, some of which may hit Taiwan. Libby notes that it is unclear that the Taiwan authorities have thought far enough ahead to make plans to adequately evacuate or shelter these individuals if severe weather again threatens their safety. Libby adds that lack of Taiwan inter-agency cooperation has hampered communication and coordination in local areas.

110. (SBU) ADIR comment on U.S. assistance: As a result of this briefing, the two courses of action now being pursued are: 1) to determine whether DoD has other heavy-lift helicopters in the region that can be brought in to transport the heavier earth moving equipment no on the ground in southern Taiwan. This would have a significant impact on relief operations. 2) to recommend to Taiwan rescue and relief officials that they develop a contingency plan to begin evacuation of the more than 10,000 villagers who remain in the isolated villages throughout the area. USAID Regional Director Dwyer is likely to deliver this message when he meets with relevant Taiwan officials in the next few days.

WANG